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TAGS: [PREL](#) [PTER](#) [PINR](#) [KWBG](#) [KPAL](#) [LE](#) [SY](#) [IR](#) [AE](#)
SUBJECT: TFLE01: MINSTATE AL-SHA'ALI ON LEBANON SITUATION

REF: ABU DHABI 2893

Classified by Ambassador Michele J. Sison, reasons 1.4 (B) and (D).

¶11. (C) Summary: UAE Minister of State for Foreign Affairs Mohammed Hussein Al-Sha'ali convoked Ambassadors from all G-8 countries July 17 to call for a concerted effort to calm the situation in Lebanon. He offered three specific UAE points of view: 1) Israel's actions recklessly violate Lebanese sovereignty, 2) Israel may be helping strengthen Hezbollah into a "new Al-Qa'ida, and 3) failure of the peace process is responsible for the current crisis. He called on the UNSC to initiate a thorough discussion of "all aspects" of regional peace. Al-Sha'ali did not see a direct Syrian role in the current crisis and preferred not to "broaden the conflict" by pointing fingers at Damascus. He noted Iran's involvement in funding and arming Hezbollah, and reported that the July 15 Cairo Arab League foreign ministers' meeting, which he chaired, had witnessed unanimous agreement that Hezbollah's actions were unjustified.

¶12. (SBU) Summary continued: President Khalifa bin Zayed Al-Nahyan's July 16 meeting with Egyptian President Mubarak in Cairo was cited in UAE news reports as calling for solidarity with Lebanon and an immediate cease-fire, as well as UNSC intervention. UAE humanitarian responses to the crisis now include a commitment of \$ 20 million, ambulances and medical supplies, repatriation assistance for UAE nationals and residents, and relaxation of visa rules for Lebanese visiting the UAE. End summary.

¶13. (C) UAE Minister of State for Foreign Affairs Mohammed Hussein Al-Sha'ali convoked Ambassadors from the G-8 countries July 17 to emphasize UAE views on the urgency of the "continuing Israeli aggression against Lebanon." Sha'ali, who noted that he had chaired the Arab League's July 15 ministerial in Cairo on the same topic, said the UAE position centered around three points. First, the UAE "thinks that Israeli targeting of civilians and Lebanese infrastructure is a flagrant violation of Lebanese sovereignty and should be stopped immediately." He said the UAE could see no justification for this level of military action and cited the importance of the international community helping support Lebanon to enhance its political stability.

¶14. (C) The UAE's second point concerned Hezbollah. Al-Sha'ali prefaced by stating that "all agree" that Hezbollah is a threat to security and stability in the region and should be disarmed according to UNSCR 1559. Unfortunately, he continued, what the UAE now sees is "Israeli aggression indirectly helping Hezbollah" to gain strength within the region. Israel is "creating a hero" and a "new Al-Qa'ida" more threatening than Osama bin Laden. Hezbollah is threatening for three reasons, said Al-Sha'ali: 1) it is "fighting a legitimate cause" in the view of most Arabs, 2) it has Lebanon as a platform from which to operate,

and 3) it has a "big country" (Iran) supporting it. Al-Sha'ali said Iran and Israel appeared to be working towards a similar goal -- "driving a wedge between Arab governments and their peoples." He said popular support for Hezbollah's cause led to street-level condemnation of Arab governments for taking a balanced stance. He said Arab League "differences" about how to address the problem in Cairo revolved around the timing of any condemnation of Hezbollah -- when in fact "all agreed" that Hezbollah's actions were unjustified.

¶5. (C) For his final point, Al-Sha'ali said that current "incidents" were the result of a failed peace process. He said the G-8 countries had "special weight" and should work toward the longer term goal of regional peace. He noted the Arab foreign ministers had called on the Security Council to "deal with the peace process in all of its aspects." The 2002 Beirut Summit had produced an Arab peace initiative which had not received due consideration internationally, he felt. He said the Arab League was not seeking a mere "resolution" from the Security Council, but a full discussion of the conflict and a plan of action "no matter how long it takes." Al-Sha'ali appealed to the G-8 to "do whatever it takes" to bring a cease-fire to Lebanon immediately, to avoid "more distress," while focusing on broader issues of regional peace.

¶6. (C) Responding to Ambassador's inquiry about Hezbollah and its supporters in Iran and Syria, Al-Sha'ali said the UAE did not want to "broaden the conflict" by pointing fingers at Syria. He did not see a strong Syrian role in the current crisis. Syrian support to Hezbollah was "only political," he noted, while Iran's support was financial and arms-related. He added that Iran "chose this time" to incite tensions to discredit Arab governments by showing the Arab peoples that their leaders had been unable to resolve the Palestinian issue. Ambassador also asked about FM Sheikh Abdullah's planned travel to Tehran; Al-Sha'ali replied that the July 29 trip had been postponed.

¶7. (SBU) Press reports from Sheikh Khalifa's July 16 meeting with President Mubarak in Cairo highlight Khalifa's call for solidarity with Lebanon, ending the Israeli aggression, and calls for a cease-fire and immediate intervention by the UN Security Council. The official UAE new agency WAM said the leaders "renewed their support to the Palestinian people and their right for an independent state with Jerusalem as its capital." The WAM statement also noted discussions on Iraq, the UAE islands occupied by Iran, and calls to rid the Middle East of weapons of mass destruction. Khalifa travels to Paris and Rabat this week with FM Abdullah.

¶8. (SBU) UAE contributions to Lebanon in the past few days include 20 million dollars committed by President Khalifa, primarily for medical supplies, to "lighten the suffering" of the Lebanese people; 25 ambulances reportedly dispatched July 16 (according to MFA); and emergency provisions (to be purchased locally in Lebanon) coordinated by the Red Crescent Society headed by Sheikh Hamdan bin Zayed. The UAE also extended the validity of visas for Lebanese passport holders visiting the UAE and waived fines for Lebanese who overstay their term of residence due to the current crisis.

¶9. (SBU) The UAE's evacuation effort from Lebanon, which reportedly assisted in the return to the UAE of over 3,000 UAE nationals via an emergency air bridge from Damascus, also extends to Lebanese or other nationalities resident in the UAE. The MFA claims that over 6,000 non-UAE nationals were assisted in their return to the Emirates. (Note: We estimate the Lebanese population in the UAE at over 70,000. End note.)

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